



USS LST-23

Builder: Dravo Corporation, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Commissioned: 22 May 1943

Assigned to: LST Flotilla 13, Group 37, Division 73

Decommissioned: 24 May 1946

Disposition: Sold for scrap to the Kaiser Company, Seattle, Washington

Length: 327' 9" oa

Beam: 50'

Draft: 1' 6" bow, 7' 5" stern (unloaded); 8' 2" bow, 14' 1" stern (loaded -- at sea);
3' 1" bow, 9' 6" (loaded -- beaching)

Displacement: 1,625 (light); 4,080 (w/ full load of 2,100 tons)

Propulsion: 2 x General Motors 12-567 diesels, twin shafts/rudders

Range: 24,000 nm @ 9 knots

Top Speed: 11.6 knots

Complement: 111

Troops: 163

Initial Armament: 7 x 40mm (single mount); 6 x 20 mm (single mount); 2 x .50-caliber mgs; 4 x .30-caliber mgs

Commanding Officers:

LT(jg) Maynard C. Darnall, Jr., USCGR: ?

History:

USS *LST-23*

LST Flotilla 13, Group 37, Division 73

The Coast Guard-manned USS *LST-23* was laid down at the Dravo Corporation's Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania yard on 27 October 1942. She was launched on 13 March 1942 and was sponsored by Mrs. Mary H. Miller. After floating down the Ohio and Mississippi to Algiers, Louisiana, she was placed in commission on 22 May 1943.

On 10 June 1943 she departed Algiers in convoy for San Francisco, via the Panama Canal. She arrived at San Diego on 1 July 1943 and at Mare Island Navy Yard on 3 July 1943. She left San Francisco on 17 July 1943, with the destroyer USS *Hutchins* (DD-476) escorting her and five other LSTs for Alaskan waters. They arrived safely at Woman's Bay, Kodiak, Alaska, on 25 July 1943. The convoy and escort departed on the 27th with an additional LST and two more escorts for Kuluk Harbor, Aleutian Islands, arriving there on 1 August 1943. Here she disembarked troops and equipment and beached to unload Army equipment. With two escorts and three other LSTs and a Navy tug she departed Kiska on 27 August 1943 for Kuluk Harbor, Adak. On the 31st *LST-23* and five other LSTs departed Adak for San Francisco with two escorts, one of which left the group to escort the *LST-19*, which was suffering engine trouble, back to Adak Island. (No further reports are available on the *LST-23* until 4 April 1944.)

On 4 April 1944 she was in the Marshall Islands en route Pearl Harbor which she reached on 24 April, remaining there until 15 June 1944. On 23 May 1944, the officers and men were recommended for consideration for awards for bravery and meritorious performance of duty. Proceeding to Eniwetok on 3 July 1944, the LST participated in the Peleliu landing on 15 September 1944. On 12 October 1944, she was at Espiritu Santo. On 16 October 1944 her medical officer, LT(jg) A. R. M. Sears, USNR, wrote to the Force Surgeon of the South Pacific Area regarding the morale on board *LST-23* and it provides a unique insight into life aboard a Coast Guard-manned LST in the Pacific during this point in the war:

"1. The morale of the personnel of this vessel is suffering considerable hardship and measures to remedy the situation have failed thus far. The men most affected are those aboard who have been on constant duty on this vessel since before it went into commission in May 1943. However, there are other men aboard who have been overseas up to twenty seven months and they likewise are suffering.

2. The present medical officer has been aboard in excess of four months and has been able to observe the various officers and members of the crew and to

evaluate their mental condition. Some of these men have grown so irritable that they are easily excited and often are called before Captain's Mast for acts committed because of the irritability acquired from their prolonged service aboard this ship. One signalman in particular had his rate taken away from him for an act against a senior petty officer, the whole of which, it is believed, arose from the irritability and mental fatigue from their long tour of duty.

3. These men do not have opportunity for liberty for long periods of time and seeing the same faces month after month, being unable to move in more than the small confines of the ship, has made many of them tired of each other, even suspicious and afraid of one another.

4. The ship has participated in action with the enemy and has been in extreme danger on numerous occasions. Some of its personnel have been wounded by enemy action. Many of the original members of the crew as well as some of those more recently assigned have developed extreme nervousness under danger due to their repeated subjection to shellfire and nearness to explosions of bombs with no means of protection other than the projectiles from their own guns.

5. This vessel is a U.S. Navy ship manned by U.S. Coast Guard personnel which seems to make it difficult to obtain replacement personnel. The morale of the ship falls even lower when in port for the men find that Navy ships of the same class are sending men back to the states for leave and reassignment after eighteen months, twelve months, and even shorter periods.

6. We are hopeful that the Force Surgeon may be able to take some action which will result in the relief of the immediate situation and also establish some means by which personnel may be replaced after the specified eighteen months of sea duty in order to prevent any more permanent damage to the minds and morale of these men."

LT Sears letter did indeed stimulate some action. A 26 October 1944 memo to the Commandant (P), noted that 29 enlisted men were sent to LST-23 to relieve an equal number of her crew. Three officers were also sent as relief.

On 5 December 1944, while returning from a supply trip *LST-23* while in North Surigao Straits was hit a glancing blow by a plane causing a fire and extensive damage. After being repaired, *LST-23* participated in the landings at Lingayen Gulf, Luzon, on 9 January 1945, after which she returned to San Diego, California. Departing San Diego on 17 February 1945, she proceeded to Guam via Pearl Harbor, arriving there on 2 April 1945, and returning to San Francisco on 6 May 1945. Her next trip took her to Sasebo, Japan. Leaving Pearl Harbor on 3 September 1945, after the end of the war, she arrived in Sasebo. During the voyage, on 15 September 1945 she was redesignated as *LSTH-23*. She departed Sasebo on 28 September for Lingayen and Manila. She left Manila on

10 October for Wakayama, Japan, via Lingayen, arriving there on 22 October. She returned to San Francisco on 2 February 1946, via Okinawa, Sasebo, Saipan, and Pearl Harbor.

She was decommissioned and her Coast Guard crew removed on 5 May 1945. She was struck from the Naval Register and eventually sold for scrap to the Kaiser Company, Inc., of Seattle. The *LST-23* earned six battle stars for her service during World War II.



"IT'S NOT A SECRET ANY MORE: For the first time, LST's (Landing Ships, Tanks) are shown here with their huge, swinging doors wide open. After Sicily, Italy and the Aleutians, these yawning doors are no longer a surprise to the Axis. A Coast Guard officer in command of one of the giant landing craft took this picture, showing soldiers and Coast Guardsmen during unloading operations in the Aleutians."; no date; Photo No. 924435; photographer unknown.

The Coast Guard-manned LSTs 23 (background) and 69 (foreground).



No caption/date/photo number; photographer unknown.

Sources:

LST files, Coast Guard Historian's Office.

United States Coast Guard. *The Coast Guard At War. V. Transports and Escorts. Vol. 2.* Washington: Public Information Division, Historical Section, U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters, May 1, 1949, pp. 66-116.

United States Navy. *Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships. Volume VII.* Washington: Naval Historical Center, 1981, pp. 574-742.

